



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY



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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"Men find themselves in a corporate capacity doing or acquiescing in things which no individual would do or tolerate. They think that social errors and injustices are due to the 'badness' of men, and that these could be corrected by the substitution of an equally abstract 'goodness'; whereas, in fact our social mechanisms would accomplish the same ends no matter what the abstract qualities of those who operated them... It is true that of all the organisations, those of centralised finance come nearest to the source of power; but in the last analysis men empower the bankers and the State by reason of self-generated illusion..."*

"As we trace the secret power of society from its source in nescience, we observe that historic initial defection from 'reality' when men transferred their conception of wealth from real things to money, thus preparing the way for the usurer and his eternal lie that money makes money."

– *"Human Ecology: The Science of Social Adjustment"* by Thomas Robertson, 1947

THE THREAT BEHIND FREE TRADE by Jeremy Lee:

Rebuffed by the majority of nations attending the recent Chiang Mai, Thailand, conference of APEC, Prime Minister Howard has now signed a bilateral ('one-on-one') free trade agreement with Singapore. In doing so he has followed the lead of the Helen Clarke government in New Zealand.

An article in *The Press* (NZ, 18/9/2000) reported New Zealand Finance Minister Michael Cullen saying he hoped the trade agreement with Singapore would be in place by January 1st. The article said: *".....Since New Zealand and Australia forged a Closer Economic Relations agreement, trans-Tasman trade has surged. The same could be expected from the Singapore pact."*

Concern has been expressed by New Zealand's Trade Union Federation that the Singapore Agreement could be used to get products from Indonesian sweatshops into New Zealand through the back door. It feared textiles, clothing and shoes could be made on the cheap on Indonesian islands just off the coast of Singapore.

With Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines rebuffing Howard's preferred multilateral free trade plans through APEC, the Prime Minister has now opted for a one on one agreement with Singapore.

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"ON TARGET"

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The Weekend Australian (18-19/11/2000) reported: "....Singapore has initiated bilateral negotiations with four APEC nations – New Zealand, Japan, Mexico and now Australia"

Australians should not be lulled into thinking the arrangements are purely about trade. One part of Closer Economic Relations with New Zealand is the free movement and residency of citizens between the two countries; hence the large shift in immigrants from New Zealand to Australia without the need for passports or visas. New Zealand immigrants are not counted as part of Australia's overall immigration intake.

A news report from Tom Allard in Brunei on November 16th, which appeared on the Internet, warned that the free movement of citizens between Singapore and Australia, including automatic residency, is on the agenda of the agreement Howard intends to sign with Singapore.

This needs confirmation as soon as possible. Readers are urged to write to their Federal Members asking them to confirm or deny this possibility. The implications are grave. Immigration Minister Ruddock's task – already creating horrendous problems – would be impossible with a steady stream of immigrants from Singapore, without visas and passports. Singapore, only a few kilometres from Malaysia, would develop a whole lot of unanticipated new 'export' industries.

DOES PETER THINK HE'S JOSEPH? The position of Australia's primary producers, and the towns and rural industries that service them, is now critical. The floods in New South Wales and parts of Queensland are the last straw. In the third disastrous year in succession at least 1 million tonnes of grain have been lost in New South Wales, and the damage so far is estimated to exceed \$600 million. Even before the water has receded, bank foreclosure on bankrupt farms is being canvassed. It has already started on Queensland's Darling Downs. It must be cheering news to farm families as they gaze on waterlogged fields to know that their title-deeds are now forfeit.

The suggested remedies are pitiful. National Party members are wringing their hands without actually taking a stand. Politicians are asking banks not to foreclose for three months. Interest-rate subsidies are being tentatively suggested.

At most such palliatives can only prolong the agony. Farmers must somehow find seed and fuel for next year's planting. They have a further wait for a possible harvest. Every day of that period the debt they cannot pay hangs over their heads, and the interest mounts. Subsidising the interest does not, therefore, make it payable.

Into this scenario this week ventured our noble Treasurer Peter Costello in gumboots. In his keeping is not only the biggest tax yield in Australia's history, but a huge surplus boosted by a massive price-rise in petrol and diesel – the fuel which is the life-blood of the farmers who hope to plant again. Almost half the cost of fuel is tax, which fills Costello's coffers.

Sane people would think that the Budget Surplus would immediately be used as a disaster fund to keep our producers alive. They are not the only ones suffering. The level of poverty right across Australia is at record levels. There are funding crises in every area of life, while the Government keeps excess revenue over expenditure for political purposes. How Costello was able to look into the eyes of desperate Goondiwindi farmers beggars belief.

He is like the Joseph of the Old Testament, who dispossessed the Egyptian people (Genesis: Chapters 41 to 47). According to the story, the Egyptians had seven good seasons, during which the government bought all their grain. There followed seven bad seasons, during which the government sold the grain back to starving people. When the people ran out of money, the government dispossessed them of their livestock, and finally of their land. Genesis 47: v. 18, 19 records the people as saying to Joseph (the Treasurer): *"We will not hide from my lord that our money is all spent, and the cattle are my lord's. There is nothing left for my lord except our bodies, and our lands. Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for food, and we and our land will be slaves for Pharaoh. So give us seed, that we may live and not die, and that our land may not be desolate"*

In the modern Australia, Pharaoh has been replaced by the trading banks. The "gang-of-four" (Westpac, NBA, ANZ and the now privately-owned Commonwealth) have between them made another record profit this year of \$8.4 billion. Our government is now suggesting they wait a few months before taking their pound of flesh from desperate rural people. The monstrosity of this position is so embracing that none dare speak of it.

What could be done? Back in 1972 when the ALP was seeking office, its Federal Rural Policy drew attention to the staggering debt crisis affecting primary producers. It pointed to dying rural towns and the drift to the city. It went on: *".... Labor's debt alleviation policies would take the form of making available to potentially viable properties long-term, low-interest loans to pay off immediately the crippling high-interest short term loans, which many producers have been forced to accept from financial institutions and hire purchase companies. At the same time a Labor Government will allow a holiday period of up to five years for potentially viable farmers as regards the repayment of principal and interest in order to allow farmers to strengthen their position"*

The policy went on to emphasise that the Commonwealth Bank, at that time a 'peoples' bank', would be used for the purpose. Subsequently the same Labor Party sold the Commonwealth Bank – to pay off part of its debt to other banks!

GST WOES CONTINUE: *The Herald Sun* (17/11/2000) pointed out that the post GST slump had resulted in a drop of at least \$1.5 billion from Victoria's economy. But it pointed out that *"Treasurer Peter Costello's battle to hold on to his first GST Budget Surplus had won plaudits from an international ratings agencyThe Herald Sun has found:*

- * BANKRUPTCIES jumped 5 percent in July, the GST's first month.*
- * RETAIL sales fell 6.4 percent in the September quarter compared with last year*
- * UP TO 15 percent of small businesses could be wiped out by a GST cash-flow crisis expected to hit by March of next year.*

"Accountants also claim they cannot cope with tax-related paperwork which the Howard Government promised to cut....."

On November 20th *The Herald Sun* added these comments: *"A third of small businesses failed to meet the GST start-up deadline for business activity statements.*

"Despite up to 600,000 late lodgements, Tax Commissioner Michael Carmody is confident of clearing his last major GST hurdle by the end of this month.

"The GST effort appears to have dealt a heavy blow to small business confidence, with the latest Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry survey recording a plunge in expectations. The survey found many people thought their business outlook was deteriorating. GST uncertainty, petrol prices and higher interest rates were all partly to blame"

KONRAD KALEJS by Betty Luks:

Upon asking an old friend if the Australian/Latvian communities were helping Konrad Kalejs in any way – even moral support – I was told he didn't know, but he was not getting involved. He went on to justify his stand by reinforcing how he felt about Communism. Of course! he was as 'anti-communist' as ever, "and wrote letters to the papers, even to the Latvian papers", but on the issue of 'war crimes' and Konrad Kalejs he didn't want to get involved.

When asked what was the situation back in Latvia he informed me that with the collapse of Communism, the former-KGB-mafia had taken over the collective farms, industries and other state-owned enterprises, claiming them as their own ('privatised' them) and these same political gangsters were the 'neo-capitalists' – the 'new' ruling elite.

In which case, what my old friend couldn't, or wouldn't, see was the same political gangsters are in control of Latvia, as before, and Mr. Kalejs' hope of a fair hearing and justice would have 'buckley's'. My old friend may be 'anti-communist' but I am not sure that he is 'pro-justice'.

I now understand what Christ meant when he said, "*... And whatever measure you deal out to others will be dealt back to you...*"

If we Australians – including my old Latvian friend – do not care about the plight of Mr. Kalejs, then the time will come when Australians could come under such 'international' legislation and come before the same type of political gangsters in positions of power – and who will care about us?

Having closely followed the Adelaide 'war crimes' trial, and later acquittal, of Mr. Ivan Polyukhovich I can say it was with a sense of thankfulness I knew he lived out the rest of his life in peace.

That the man was charged with such 'crimes' let alone brought before the courts was a great injustice. I attended as many days of the committal hearings as possible and, sadly, counted so few from the 'captive nations' association publicly giving him and his wife moral support.

Mr. Douglas Christie, the barrister who defended Hungarian/Canadian Imre Finta, the first person to be charged with 'war crimes' in the western world warned us, "*There is no end to the tactics of the enemies of freedom and justice. They never sleep. They never quit. When one old man like Mr. Finta is finally vindicated after years of legal battles,... they just push for appeal and start a new attack. Those who love freedom and justice must be just as determined... We owe it to God, our heritage, ourselves, and our descendants to maintain forever just laws and a just application of laws.*"

A letter from you to the Minister for Justice and Customs, Senator Amanda Vanstone could be just the thing to 'tip the scales' in Mr. Kalejs' favour.